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ABSTRACT

The court reporting curriculum at Alvin Community College, which leads to an associate of applied science degree, has been praised by the National Shorthand Reporters Association, which sets the standards for court reporting schools. The court reporter uses a method of taking notes called stenotypy which entails taking down verbatim everything that is said at a trial, hearing, or meeting. A special machine called a stenograph which employs a method of rapid writing by the use of alphabetic letters to represent the phonetic sounds of language is used by the reporter. The court reporter must be a person who can pay attention to detail and who has the patience and concentration to do hours of dictation and transcription. A successful student must be able to use the English language and master the exacting demands of the stenograph machine. The five semester program requires that students have a high school diploma and take courses in typing, machine shorthand theory, law and legal terminology, communication skills, grammar and punctuation, transcription, medical terminology, national and state government, sociology, courtroom procedures, technical dictation, and general office practices. (HB)

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COURT REPORTING CURRICULUM FOR AN ASSOCIATE IN APPLIED SCIENCE DEGREE AT ALVIN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

by
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COURT REPORTING CURRICULUM FOR
AN ASSOCIATE IN APPLIED SCIENCE DEGREE
AT ALVIN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

I. Introduction

The Court Reporter uses a method for taking notes called stenotypy. Stenotypy is a method of taking down verbatim everything that is said at a trial, hearing, or meeting. The Court Reporter uses a special machine called a Stenograph which employs a method of rapid writing by the use of alphabetic letters to represent the phonetic sounds of language. By use of numerous abbreviations and high-frequency phrases, extremely high speed is achieved by the writer. After the reporter takes notes at a trial or hearing, it is his responsibility to prepare a transcript that will become official court record. The reporter may prepare a transcript by use of one of four methods, he may typewrite it himself, he may use a dictating machine and employ a typist to do the typewriting from his tapes, he may turn his notes over to a note-reader where such readers are available, or he may have his notes translated by a computer.

The Court Reporter must be a person who can pay attention to detail and who has the patience and concentration to do hours of dictation and transcription. Past history indicates that it is impossible to determine who is going to be a successful court reporting student. Only two factors seem to make a significant difference: the student's ability to use the

English language and determination to master the exacting demands of mastering the machine.

The standards for Court Reporting schools are set by the National Shorthand Reporters Association. Each school that is approved by the National Shorthand Reporters Association must meet minimum requirements. Some of the minimum standards are:

1. The student shall possess a high school diploma or its equivalent.
2. The school shall conduct the following courses:
   a. A course in shorthand that will enable a student to write with accuracy at 225 words per minute.
   b. A course in typing that will enable a student to attain a speed of 60 words per minute.
   c. A course in English covering grammar, word study, punctuation, spelling, and capitalization.
   d. A course in law including principles of civil and criminal law, legal terminology and common Latin phrases, rules of evidence, court procedures, the duties of the court reporter, the ethics of his profession, and visits to actual trials.
   e. A course in elementary anatomy and physiology, and in medical word study including medical

prefixes, roots, and suffixes.[1]

In June of 1975, Alvin Community College, located 25 miles south of Houston, began offering court reporting classes after bringing six of the best instructors and 18 students from McMahon College of Court Reporting. McMahon College of Court Reporting closed due to financial problems. Since that time, the Court Reporting Department at Alvin Community College has grown to a present size of 95 students and has received national acclaim for the excellence of its educational program.

II. Program and Course Descriptions

The Court Reporting Department's facilities include classrooms equipped for testimony classes, conference rooms used to simulate actual office conditions, and court room that is used by the college as well as local court system.

The five-semester court reporting program leads to an Associate in Applied Science Degree (see Appendix A for curriculum and Appendix B for course descriptions). All students spend one semester in machine shorthand theory. Machine shorthand is concerned with vocabulary development and number writing skills built through reading and machine practice of a computer compatible system of writing. This course applies court phrases and abbreviations from the first lesson. Transcription from notes are taught, applying basic principles of grammar and punctuation.

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[1]National Shorthand Reporters Association, Pamphlet: "Shorthand Reporting as a Career," (Arlington, Virginia, 1973), p. 12-15.

The ability to spell and write numerals on the machine automatically will be developed during this semester. Transcription from notes will occupy its proper place during the second half of the semester, to prepare the student to enter a beginning speed dictation class, upon passage of three 40-word-per-minute tests with a grade of 95%. This course is offered to offer the foundation for the entire court reporting course and is the most valuable course in this curriculum.

This one-semester course aims to teach the student the "code" of the Stenograph machine in the first 25 lessons, together with the basic punctuation marks. This covers the first five weeks' work. The rest of the course follows exactly as outlined in the textbook, with each lesson and its "A" review lesson occupying one day's work. The course will provide intensive drill on numbers and spellings, plurals of numbers and words, times of day, all state abbreviations, word beginnings and endings of all types required for basic writing, but excepting the involved ones which are incompatible with the early stages of writing. At the end of this semester, the student will be able to write difficult material at 40 words per minute or simple material at 60-80 words per minute, with reasonable typewritten transcript ability (95%).

Following the theory semester, the course is entirely self-paced in the machine shorthand work. Students attend testimony and literary instruction classes daily. In order to progress, students must pass three tests on vital speeches

which contain very difficult material, testimony and jury charge, at an upward progression of speeds beginning at 40 words per minute and finally gaining mastery of 225 words per minute on testimony material. The instructors require 98-99 percent accuracy on the tests.

To give the students an opportunity to practice outside the classroom, the College's Learning Resources Center offers a number of aids. Cassette tapes of actual testimony, jury charges, and literary materials are available in all speeds to aid students when practicing. Students can even have the material recorded on their own cassettes by the center so they can practice at home.

In addition to the machine practice, students take full-semester classes in law and legal terminology and medical terminology because most court reporting work demands familiarity with those areas.

Legal terminology is designed to teach the student to build a legal vocabulary and to develop skill in recognizing the meaning of legal terminology by studying prefixes, suffixes, roots, and abbreviations. Spelling and pronunciation of legal terms are stressed. Writing of lectures and tapes on law topics combines machine skill with development of legal knowledge. Topics covered in lectures are development of law, systems of courts, criminal law, contract law, torts, domestic relations, agency, real property, decedent estate law, corporations, maritime law, equity, nogotiable instruments, declaratory judgments, pleadings and motion practice, examinations before trail, and

trial procedures.

Knowledge of the terminology used in law is essential, since this is the area within which the reporter works. A reporter can make an intelligent record only when he or she is cognizant of procedures, background of the law to a high degree, and the terminology used by the participants in the cases. A practicing reporter must have understanding of legal terminology beyond the simply dictionary definition stage because transcripts must be prepared rapidly in great volume.

Upon completion of this course, the student will have a good understanding of the basics of law and a wide working legal terminology vocabulary. He will also have a great deal of essential information concerning citations and researching of material in the preparation of a totally verbatim transcript. A lecture on the Code of Ethics is included in this course to satisfy the NSRA requirement in that regard. Another specific lecture will be devoted to maritime reporting and the terminology and law of this field. How to use the legal library will be taught in this course.

Medical terminology course is designed to enable the student to build thousands of medical words from Greek and Latin prefixes, suffixes, word roots and combining forms, thus equipping the reporting prospect to dissect any medical word and define it, even though it has not been encountered before. Intelligent use of medical dictionaries and medical reference works is emphasized. Drills perfect skills in spelling medical terminology. Branches of science that deal with the study of the

human body and the medical specialties are thoroughly covered.

Study of anatomy of the body includes cells and tissues, skeletal structure, articulations, muscular system, nervous system, special sense organs, endocrine system, circulatory system, lymphatic system, respiratory system, gastrointestinal system, genitourinary systems of the male and female, and the integumentary system.

Special emphasis is given to areas relating to court reporting. Extensive transcription practice applies dictated material and selected medical tapes supply added writing practice on medical material.

Over 80 percent of the cases in civil and criminal courts require taking and transcription of medical material. Also, many medical conventions and symposiums require services of court reporters, as do Workmen's Compensation Hearings, which are almost purely medical in nature. The volume of transcription required in these matters necessitates an excellent background in medical terminology to eliminate lengthly research in each and every case, and to enable the student to research intelligently when required to do so.

Students are also required to take two semesters of court reporting English, daily transcription, typing, and technical dictation.

The English for Court Reporters is offered to beginning students to assist them in transcribing correctly their stenography. This course is designed around proofreading the English

language. It is thought that a student of court reporting is unable to transcribe accurately unless he has a basic knowledge of the English language.

While students have had English grammar studies during their other schooling, it is felt that very few have adequate backgrounds. Usually students' background of English has been from a writing standpoint. Now he must correctly put on paper what someone else says. He must have a through knowledge of proper English to be able to understand usage of other speakers.

The most popular course is courtroom procedures. In this two-semester course, students learn to mark exhibits, and to prepare cover pages, appearance pages, indexes, colloquy, testimony set-ups, and certificates. Courtroom procedures simulates actual working conditions of the freee lance and official reporter through use of authentic three- and four-voice transcripts of statements, depositions, courtroom cases, arbitration, workmen's compensation, grant jury, and preliminary hearings, board of directors meetings, panels, etc. Transcripts are required of indexes, cover pages, title pages, colloquy, testimony, certificates, and other assigned matter. This vital course bridges the gap between classroom and working world, giving the student the finishing touches essential to assure confidence and ability necessary to put him in a position commanding high compensation upon completion of the course.

It is also designed to fully acquaint the student with the duties of free lance and official reporters, to teach

methods of filing of notes and transcripts, to give knowledge of conference reporting and procedures, to teach daily copy routines, to teach the student to handle voir dire of jury panels and for the basis of objections, and to prepare all types of required transcription. This course also presents to the student his position as it relates to other officers of the Court. Upon completion of this course, the student is competent to join the ranks of experienced reporters and capable to do every job of court reporting.

Finally, the beginning reporters complete a general office practice semester, during which they learn to dictate for the transcriber, keep accounting and tax records, use video tape, and all other functions of the free-lance reporter. To complete this course, a student must take a deposition which will be dictated for another student's transcription.

General Office Practices teaches general techniques and procedures used by free lance and official reporters in carrying out their office duties and responsibilities. Introduces the steps in taking depositions; the use of office dictation equipment, primarily the Stenorette; stresses dictation from notes, emphasizing enunciation in gerneral and verb tenses, word endings, and punctuation in particular; promotes practice in transcribing from reporters' dictated tapes in proper form; use of work sheets, marking exhibits, subpoenas, notices, and other related legal documents. Demonstrates techniques of invoicing, indexing and filing of notes, basic bookkeeping,

sample letter writing, tax records, and other pertinent office practices. Many lecture periods are devoted to discussion of dress codes, reporter ethics and professionalism. Arrangements are made when possible for the student to accompany a practicing court reporter on actual assignments, observing on-the-job techniques and the job preparations at the office. A necessary complement to the courses on speed and accuracy, this course attempts to balance the machine tools of court reporting with a knowledge of office routine and job responsibilities and thereby provide the beginning reporter with more productive ability and adaptation in a very demanding profession.

Students are also required to take a course in transcription. Transcription from notes is taught, applying the basic principles of grammar and punctuation, using material to cover vocabularies of all specialized fields and all phases of reporting. Students are taught to apply appropriate rules and set-ups in all transcription projects in order to produce an acceptable finished product. This course serves as a basis for the student's understanding of how to prepare accurate, properly researched transcripts, since this is primary to insure employability of the graduating reporter prospect.

A daily transcript is assigned. The materials selected represent literary, legal, testimony, technical, and medical takes representing all phases of reporting. Assigned work is to be typed and proofread within a 50-minute period. Assigned

work is then thoroughly checked and discussed as to format, spellings, word usuages, and punctuation.

After completing all courses, the reporter is then ready to enter a profession offering such varied opportunities as free-lance reporting, working in legislatures, working for government bureaus, or as officials for judges.

Because Alvin Community College court reporting graduates have proven outstanding, they can expect to enter the profession making $15,000 to $25,000 the first year.

In June of 1978, when NSRA representatives came to evaluate the Alvin Community College court reporting curriculum for accreditation, they said, "We would be hard put to find the smallest thing to criticize here. You have a wonderful facility and a fantastic program." The students couldn't agree more.

Appendix A

COURT REPORTING

Degree: Associate in Applied Science

Length: Four-Semester (Two-Year) Curriculum, plus one summer term.

Purpose: The Associate in Applied Science Degree curriculum in Court Reporting is designed to prepare students for job entry positions in court reporting; to prepare students for positions related to court reporting, i.e., transcribers, note-readers, and typists; and to assist in preparing students for job entry positions as legal secretaries. The purpose of this curriculum is to meet a need which exists due to the greatly expanding Gulf Coast area, the increasing demand for qualified court reporters throughout the nation, and the lack of institutions to provide the necessary training.

Program Requirements: The curriculum is designed to run for two years. However, the machine shorthand courses will be offered in such a way as to allow students to progress at their own individual rates. Maximum use of live dictation exists in the program, as practice tapes are encouraged for use off-campus. Accommodations will be made for students to secure credit for work previously accomplished through the credit-by-examination procedure.

Program Objectives: The objective of the two-year curriculum is for the student to attain the machine shorthand speed of 225 words/minute, with material equivalent to standards of the National Shorthand Reporters Association (NSRA). An accompanying objective will be the attainment of the Legal Stenography Certificate at the end of the second semester of the program for those students who so desire.

COURT REPORTING

Associate in Applied Science

Course Number	Course Title	Lecture Hours	Lab Hours	Course Credits
	First Semester			
SECT 122	Typing II	2	3	3
CTRP 111	Machine Shorthand Theory	6	4	6
CTRP 121	Law and Legal Terminology	4	1	3
ENGL 111	Communication Skills I	3	0	3
CTRP 141	Grammar and Punctuation I	2	0	2
PHED	Physical Education	0	2	1
		17	10	18
	Second Semester			
SECT 220	Typing III	2	3	3
CTRP 112	Machine Shorthand I (60-80-100)	6	4	6
CTRP 130	Transcription I	0	5	2
CTRP 122	Medical Terminology	4	1	3
ENGL 112	Communication Skills II	3	0	3
CTRP 142	Grammar and Punctuation II	2	0	2
PHED	Physical Education	0	2	1
		17	15	20

COMPLETES REQUIREMENTS FOR THE STENOGRAPHY CERTIFICATE

	Summer Semester			
CTRP 120	Machine Shorthand II (120-140)	6	4	6
CTRP 140	Transcription II	0	5	2
GOVT 211	American National and State Government	3	0	3
		9	9	11
	Third Semester			
SOCI 111	Principles of Sociology	3	0	3
CTRP 211	Machine Shorthand III (160-180)	6	4	6

Course Number	Course Title	Lecture Hours	Lab Hours	Course Credits
CTRP 210	Transcription III	0	5	2
CTRP 221	Courtroom Procedures I	3	2	3
CTRP 225	Technical Dictation	3	2	3
		15	13	17

Fourth Semester

CTRP 212	Machine Shorthand IV (200-225)	6	4	6
CTRP 240	General Office Practices	3	2	3
CTRP 220	Transcription IV	0	5	2
CTRP 222	Courtroom Procedures II	3	2	3
		12	13	14

COMPLETES REQUIREMENTS FOR AAS DEGREE IN COURT REPORTING

*If typing requirements have been fulfilled, the student is encouraged to attend the tape library.

**The student is encouraged to utilize the tape library for home practice.

Appendix B

COURT REPORTING
COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

CTRP 111. Machine Shorthand Theory (6 credits). Theory of machine shorthand, vocabulary development, and skill building through reading and machine practice. Dictation and transcription of machine shorthand notes. Two theory courses are required of the beginning student. Prerequisite: None. Lecture, 6 hours; Laboratory, 4 hours; Total, 10 hours per week.

CTRP 112. Machine Shorthand I (60-80-100) (6 credits). Development of vocabulary and skill building through concentrated emphasis on live dictation and transcription of machine shorthand notes. The objective of the course is to attain the speed of 100 words per minute. The student advances at his/her own rate. Prerequisite: CTRP 111. Lecture, 6 hours; Laboratory, 4 hours; Total, 10 hours per week.

CTRP 120. Machine Shorthand II (120-140) (6 credits). Emphasis on increased skill and speed. The objective of the course is to attain the speed of 140 words per minute. The student advances at his/her own rate. Prerequisite: CTRP 112. Lecture, 6 hours; Laboratory, 4 hours; Total, 10 hours per week.

CTRP 121. Law and Legal Terminology (3 credits). Course objectives are to insure comprehension of meanings and applications of legal terminology, while instructing in the various fields of law encountered in the practice of the court reporter. Emphasis is placed on the judicial system, types of courts, jurisdictions, and appleate procedures. Court practices and responsibilities of the reporter are fully covered, including ethics of the profession. Course also includes researching of legal reference books and handling of citations in the record. Lecture, 3 hours; Laboratory, 2 hours; Total, 5 hours per week. Prerequisite: None.

CTRP 122. Medical Terminology (3 credits). Study of human anatomy, skeletal structure, systems of the body, and medical specialties, coupled with lectures, study guides, tests and exercises designed to insure knowledge of the components in building medical vocabulary and application thereof. Lecture, 3 hours; Laboratory, 2 hours; Total, 5 hours per week. Prerequisite: None.

CTRP 130. Transcription I (2 credits). Supervised activity with continued concentration on dictation and transcription of shorthand notes. 0 lecture hours and 5 laboratory hours per week.

CTRP 140. Transcription II (2 credits). Supervised activity with continued concentration on dictation and transcription of shorthand notes. 0 lecture hours and 5 laboratory hours per week.

CTRP 141. Grammar and Punctuation I (2 credits). The study of basic grammar as applied to the reporting profession, with emphasis on parts of speech; formation of plurals and possessives, verbal, adverbial, and adjective comparisons; sentence patterns; capitalization, and vocabulary development. This study approaches English grammar from the proofreading aspect rather than from the writing aspect. (This course is to be given on alternate days with ENGL 111 Communication Skills I - 3 credits.) Two lecture hours and no lab hours per week.

CTRP 142. Grammar and Punctuation II (2 credits). Specialized English training applied to the reporting profession, including the study of clauses and phrases, rules of punctuation, capitalization, word division, proper transcription, forms for numerals, use of abbreviations, transcript editing, proofreading, and NSRA punctuation. The student is given numerous dictations for transcribing and is tutored in voice and speech patterns while reading notes aloud. (This course is to be given on alternate days with ENGL 112 Communication Skills II - 3 credits.) Two lecture hours and no lab hours per week.

CTRP 210. Transcription III (2 credits). Supervised activity with continued concentration on dictation and transcription of shorthand notes. Lecture, 0 hours; Laboratory, 5 hours. Total, 5 hours per week.

CTRP 211. Machine Shorthand III (160-180) (6 credits). Continued emphasis on skill and speed building. The objective is to attain the speed of 180 words per minute. Prerequisite: CTRP 120. Lecture, 6 hours; Laboratory, 4 hours; Total, 10 hours per week.

CTRP 212. Machine Shorthand IV (200-225) (6 credits). Continued emphasis on skill and speed building, culminating in the attainment of the speed of 225 words per minute. Prerequisite: CTRP 120. Lecture, 6 hours; Laboratory, 4 hours; Total, 10 hours per week.

CTRP 220. Transcription IV (2 credits). Supervised activity with continued concentration on dictation and transcription of shorthand notes. 0 lecture hours and 5 laboratory hours per week.

CTRP 221. Courtroom Procedures I (3 credits). Untimed simulated courtroom situations are presented, using attorneys, witnesses, and court personnel. Emphasis is placed on varied courtroom practices, such as voir dire examinations, opening and closing statements, objections, marking of exhibits, indexing and filing of notes, citations, read back, and preparation of transcripts in required format. Prerequisite: CTRP 120. Three lecture hours; Two lab hours per week.

CTRP 222. Courtroom Procedures II (3 credits). Untimed simulated courtroom situations are continued as described in Courtroom Procedures I. Material is presented to develop endurance and machine writing techniques. Court Reporting ethics are stressed with emphasis on the responsibilities of a reporter and the profession. At this level arrangements are made when possible for the student to participate in actual court proceeedings with an official court reporter in attendance. Three lecture hours; Two lab hours per week. Prerequisite: CTRP 221.

CTRP 225. Technical Dictation (3 credits). Dictation emphasizing all aspects of technical terminology, involving medical, legal, surveying, engineering, chemical, maritime, patent, aerospace, etc., with read back and transcription assignments in correct format, including proper transcription of mathematical and chemical formulae. This course utilizes one- and two-voice dictation material. Three lecture hours and two laboratory hours per week.

CRRP 240. General Office Practices (3 credits). The first half introduces the use of office dictation equipment, primarily the Stenorette; stresses dictation from notes, emphasizing enunciation in general and verb tenses, word endings, and punctuation in particular; promotes practice in transcribing from reporters tapes, use of work sheets, marking exhibits, and working with general deposition forms and procedures. The second half introduces techniques of billing, basic bookkeeping and tax records, sample letter writing, indexing and filing of notes, and pertinent office practices. At this level arrangements are made for the student to accompany a practicing court reporter on actual assignments, observing on-the-job techniques and the job preparations at the office. Prerequisite: CTRP 211. Three lecture hours and two lab hours per week.

APPENDIX C

Student Log Sheet

NAME _____

DATE OF ENTRY _____

DAY SCHOOL REGULAR _____ FULL TIME _____ HALF TIME _____

DAY SCHOOL VETERAN _____ FULL TIME _____ HALF TIME _____

NIGHT SCHOOL REGULAR _____

NIGHT SCHOOL VETERAN _____

DATE	REMARKS

UNIVERSITY OF CALIF.
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CLEARINGHOUSE FOR
JUNIOR COLLEGES